History at stake as India, South Africa battle for maiden Women's World Cup triumph

MUMBAI: The ICC Women's World Cup is set to crown a new champion on Sunday, when hosts India take on South Africa, as both teams look to culminate their month-long, nine-match campaign with a maiden global championship.

India are two-time finalists in the One-day International world championship, having lost the 2005 and 2017 titles to Australia and England. They also lost the Women's T20 World Cup final to Australia in 2020.

South Africa are playing a World Cup final for the third year in a row, having reached the T20 World Cup finals in 2023 and 2024, losing to Australia and New Zealand. However, this is the first time they have reached a World Cup final in

Match starts at 2:30pm (PST)

the 50-over format.

"We know very well how it feels like after losing. But the feeling after victory, that is something which we are really looking forward to," India captain Harmanpreet Kaur told reporters on Saturday.

India reached the semis as the fourth-best team in the league stage. But Kaur and Jemimah Rodrigues helped India pull off the biggest successful chase in women's ODI history on Thursday, stunning seven-time champions and favourites Australia to reach the final.

South Africa, who beat India in the league stage last month, earned a dominant 125-run win over four-time champions England in Wednesday's semi-final, as captain Laura Wolvaardt put in a player-of-the-match performance, scoring 169 off 143 balls.

"The whole crowd is behind India, probably a sold-out stadium. It definitely puts a lot of pressure on them as they're sort of expected to win. I think it plays in our favour a bit," Wolvaardt said.

"Every cricket game starts at zero. We can't bring any history into the game. Knockout cricket is completely different from league cricket. People can do some very special things in knockout games like Jemimah the other night."

Kaur said India have been preparing for the opportunity to play in the World Cup final for the last two years.

"Last time we played in the World Cup final, we saw many changes in the sport back home. Women's cricket took many steps forward, a lot of girls flocked to the grounds," said the 36-year-old.

"I'm sure, when we win the final, there will be even more changes. We will see much more cricket, not only at the international level, but domestically things will improve as well."

For South Africa, who have never won a World Cup in men's or women's cricket, the stakes are high as well.

"We recently got domestic contracts introduced. So, I can only imagine what something like a World Cup trophy will do back home. Just the number of girls that will be able to see it on TV, who will hear that we're a World Cup-winning nation," Wolvaardt said.—Reuters

Iyer discharged from hospital

NEW DELHI: Indian batsman Shreyas Iyer has been discharged from hospital after lacerating his spleen when falling heavily during a One-day International against Australia, cricket officials said on Saturday.

The 30-year-old vice-captain doubled over in pain after pulling off a sensational catch to remove Alex Carey in the third ODI in Sydney last week.

The Indian ODI vice-captain was forced off the field and hospitalised.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said on Saturday that he is "now stable and recovering well", and that "he has been discharged from the hospital".

"Shreyas will continue to stay in Sydney for follow-up consultations and will return to India once he is deemed fit to fly," it added.

Iyer is not part of India's T20 squad, which will play five matches in Australia that will serve as a tune-up for the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka in February-March.

He has scored 2,917 runs from 73 ODIs at an average of 47.81 since his ODI debut in 2017. —AFP

LAHORE: Pakistan batter Babar Azam drives during the third Twenty20 International against South Africa at the Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday.—M. Arif/White Star

Babar, Shaheen star as Pakistan claim series win over SA

By Mohammad Yaqoob

LAHORE: Babar Azam showed his mastery with the bat after Shaheen Shah Afridi had led a sparkling bowling performance from Pakistan as the hosts cruised to a four-wicket victory over South Africa in the series-deciding third Twenty20 International at the Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday.

Shaheen picked up 3-26, being the standout of Pakistan's bowling attack in which Faheem Ashraf and debutant Usman Tariq picked up two wickets each, as South Africa were restricted to 139-9 after being put into bat.

Babar then provided anchor in the chase with a brilliant 68, featuring nine fours, as Pakistan eased to victory with six balls to spare and boost morale ahead of the T20 World Cup next year.

In front of an expectant home crowd, Shaheen got Pakistan off to a flyer with two wickets halfway through the first over and almost bagged a third victim two balls later.

Opener Quinton de Kock's stumps were undone on the second ball of the innings with a delivery that jagged back, found an edge and clattered into the woodwork.

On the very next ball, Lhuandre Pretorious spooned a catch to Usman Tariq at short fine-leg.

Pakistan were in dreamland when Dewald Brevis was adjudged lbw on the first ball of a spectacular opening over only for the decision review system to show that the ball was going to rise over above the stumps.

South Africa were rocking and their first boundary only came on the penultimate ball of the third over when opener Reeza Hendricks punched Shaheen away to the extra cover fence.

Things were otherwise kept tight by Shaheen's new ball partner Salman Mirza — coming off a sparkling performance in the second match of the series a day earlier where Pakistan had shot down South Africa for 110 to level the series — giving little away as South Africa crawled to 22-2 at the end of the powerplay.

Brevis (21), though, broke the shackles with two sixes off spinner Mohammad Nazwaz in the seventh over but was fell soon after with spinner Usman Tariq striking with the second ball of his career as the South African batter found Babar Azam at long-on as he tried to go big once again.

The incoming Matthew Breetzke didn't last long, seeing his stumps shattered by Nawaz with a ball that straightened after pitching in the following over as South Africa slipped from 38-2 to 42-4.

Skipper Donovan Ferreira breathed fresh impetus with a six off Usman, as South Africa reached 56-4 halfway through their innings, and then upped the ante with two sixes and a four in the 11th over bowled by Nawaz.

But Ferreira's big-hitting spree didn't last long as, after making 29 off 13, he holed out to his counterpart Salman Ali Agha at mid-off in the following over by Faheem.

South Africa were six down on the next ball with George Linde finding Hasan Nawaz at mid-wicket with Pakistan firmly on top.

Hendricks' long, patient stay at the crease ended in the 15th over when he top-edged Usman Tariq to Hasan at deep backward square to depart for 34 off 36 with two fours.

The incoming Andile Simelane then hoisted Shaheen for the fourth six of the innings to set South Africa's total beyond Friday's below-par effort but departed after making 13 when Salman Mirza had him caught at midwicket in the 18th over.

Scoreboard

SOUTH AFRICA:	
Q. de Kock b Shaheen	0
R. Hendricks c Hasan b Usman Tariq	34
L. Pretorius c Usman Tariq b Shaheen	0
D. Brevis c Babar b Usman Tariq	21
M. Breetzke b Nawaz	1
D. Ferreira c Salman Ali Agha b Faheem	29
G. Linde c Hasan b Faheem	0
C. Bosch not out	30
A. Simelane c Shaheen b Salman Mirza	13
L. Williams c Nawaz b Shaheen	5
O. Baartman not out	0
EXTRAS (W-6)	6
TOTAL (for nine wickets, 20 overs)	139

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-0 (Qude Kock), 2-0 (Pretorius), 3-38 (Brevis), 4-42 (Breetzke), 5-76 (Ferreira), 6-76 (Linde), 7-95 (Hendricks), 8-118 (Simelane), 9-125 (Williams)

BOWLING: Shaheen 4-0-26-3 (1w); Salman Mirza 4-0-16-1; Faheem 4-0-28-2 (2w); Nawaz 3-0-38-1 (1w); Usman Tariq 4-0-26-2 (2w); Saim 1-0-5-0

PAKISTAN:	
Sahibzada Farhan c Breetzke b Ferreira	19
Saim Ayub c Ferreira b Bosch	0
Babar Azam c Hendricks b Bosch	68
Salman Ali Agha c Simelane b Williams	33
Usman Khan not out	6
Hasan Nawaz c Hendricks b Williams	5
Mohammad Nawaz b Simelane	0
Faheem Ashraf not out	4
EXTRAS (NB-1, W-4)	5
TOTAL (for six wickets, 19 overs)	140

DID NOT BAT: Shaheen Shah Afridi, Salman Mirza, Usman Tariq

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-8 (Saim), 2-44 (Farhan), 3-120 (S. Agha), 4-125 (Babar), 5-133 (Hasan), 6-134 (Nawaz)

BOWLING: Ferreira 4-0-30-1; Bosch 4-0-24-2 (2w); Linde 4-0-20-0; Williams 3-0-26-2 (2w); Simelane 3-0-23-1 (1nb); Baartman 1-0-17-0

RESULT: Pakistan won by four wickets.
MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: Babar Azam
SERIES: Pakistan won three-match series 2-1.
MAN-OF-THE-SERIES: Faheem Ashraf

Shaheen bagged his third wicket when he sent back Lizaad Williams in the penultimate over but Corbin Bosch (30 not out) ensured South Africa reached a respectable total.

Sahibzada Farhan got Pakistan's first runs in the chase with a six over long-off on the third ball of their innings but lost his opening partner Saim Ayub in the second over — the left hander miscuing to Ferreira off Bosch.

Babar, arriving to adoring cheers from the crowd, got his first four on the ninth ball he faced with a sumptuous pull off Williams and then cut him away for another two deliveries later.

Babar was in the mood and swept Linde for a one-bounce four in the following over as Pakistan reached the end of the powerplay at 36-1.

Sahibzada then got his second boundary, driving Ferreira down the ground for four, but departed soon after when the South African skipper had him caught at deep midwicket for 19 on the last ball of the seventh over.

In the face of spin from both ends, Babar and captain Salman Ali Agha sought to steady the chase with just one boundary coming in overs eighth to 10th, by the end of which Pakistan were 64-2.

Boundaries, however, came thick and fast in the 12th over by Ottneil Baartman — Salman Agha's edge flying to the third man fence after a misfield before Babar got three in a row to raise his half-century off 36 balls.

Babar, who returned to the side for the series, was putting on a show and got another two boundaries in the 14th over of Bosch as Pakistan closed in on the target.

But he and Salman Agha, who was providing able support at the other end, however couldn't take Pakistan to the end.

The skipper had just got his second boundary but perished on the next ball, having made 33 off 26, when he chipped Williams to Simelane in the 16th over.

Babar fell in the next over, when he pulled Bosch to Hendricks at deep backward square to bring an end to his 47-ball knock.

Babar's fall was followed with two more wickets as Hasan was caught off Williams and Silemane cleaned up Nawaz but Pakistan eventually wrapped it up with an over to spare.

'PHF elections to be held according to constitution'

LAHORE: The Pakistan Hockey Federation has convened its executive board and congress meetings in Lahore on Nov 7 when the election commission for clubs' scrutiny and PHF elections will be appointed.

The agenda of the congress meeting includes appointment of the election commissioner for conducting the scrutiny of clubs across the country which will be followed by the provincial hockey associations' elections and those of the PHF for the 2026-30 term.

According to PHF secretary general Rana Mujahid, the agenda of the meeting also includes approval of the 2025-26 budget and the appointment of auditors of the federation.

When asked if the PHF Congress would appoint the EC, what would be the role of the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) which had formed its election commission to conduct the elections of all the national federations, Mujahid said PSB's election commission would be welcomed as an observer of the elections and scrutiny of clubs.

He continued, "But the PHF elections will be held according to the federation's constitution. Otherwise, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) will not accept it."

Recently, Mujahid added, the elections of the Pakistan Kabaddi Federation were also held without the supervision of PSB's EC.

"Therefore, the rules and laws, which were applied for the kabaddi federation, should also be implemented for the PHF," he insisted.

It may be mentioned here that similar issues developed between the PSB and the Pakistan Olympic Association in 2012, which brought Pakistan at the brink of suspension from the International Olympic Committee due to the government's interference in POA matters.

However, in order to avoid the suspension, Ijaz Ahmed, then secretary of the Inter-Provincial Coordination Committee (IPC), went to IOC headquarters Lausanne where an agreement between the government of Pakistan and the IOC was signed under which the government gave an assurance to accept the POA as an autonomous body.

And now by appointing its election commission, the PSB decided to get the powers to conduct elections of all national sports federations but they are not ready to accept it, considering it as a violation of the Lausanne agreement.

Last year, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as PHF patron-in-chief appointed Tariq Hussain Bugti the federation's president with a mandate to scrutinise clubs and hold fresh elections.

However, Bugti ignoring the patron's instructions got himself elected as PHF president. However, now the National Assembly's Standing Committee in a meeting decided that Bugti would conduct clubs scrutiny and fresh PHF elections.

In line with these instructions, the PHF issued a press release on Saturday, saying, "With the approval of PHF President Mir Tariq Hussain Bugti, PHF Secretary General Rana Mujahid has convened the Congress and Executive Board meetings on Nov 7, 2025."—Sports Reporter

England top order woes continue as NZ complete ODI sweep

WELLINGTON: New Zealand skittled England's top order on their way to a nervy two-wicket win in the third One-day International on Saturday to sweep the series 3-0 and send the tourists off to Australia with some concerns about their batting.

After New Zealand won the toss, Blair Tickner (4-64) and Jacob Duffy (3-56) spearheaded a fine display of swing bowling at Wellington Stadium to dismiss England for 222 in the 41st over.

The chase, however, was far from straightforward, especially after Devon Conway and Tom Latham both had the misfortune to be run out by deflections off the hands of the bowler.

Daryl Mitchell's runs had steered the hosts to their victories in Tauranga and Hamilton and when he departed for 44 to leave his team still 27 runs from their target on 196-8, the English scented an unlikely victory.

Tickner, who made 18 not out, and Zak Foulkes, who finished unbeaten on 14, held their nerves to get the Black Caps across the line and secure New Zealand a 25th win in their last 27 completed ODIs on home soil.

"The most pleasing thing is different guys stepping up at different times throughout every chase," said New Zealand skipper Mitchell Santner. "But credit to the England bowlers, they never made it easy throughout all three games."

Earlier, Duffy and Foulkes (2-27) bowled beautifully as Jamie Smith, Joe Root, Ben Duckett, Harry Brook and Jacob Bethell — all members of England's Ashes squad — were removed in little more than 10 overs to leave the visitors reeling on 44-5.

Foulkes removed Smith and Root inside the first four overs before his new-ball partner Duffy accounted for Duckett, Brook and Bethell.

England's top four made a total of 84 runs across the three matches, the fewest by any team in a comparable men's ODI series or tournament.

The dismal form of Duckett and Root will be of concern less than three weeks from the start of the Ashes Test series in Australia.

England were dismissed for 223 in the opening match and 175 in the second.

Captain Brook said his players never adjusted to the movement extracted by New Zealand's pace bowlers in seam-friendly conditions.

"We didn't quite get big enough scores to be able to defend them and give the bowlers the best chance to win us the game," Brook said. "New Zealand are the second-best team in the world for a reason. They've outplayed us in this series. We just haven't been good enough."

Scoreboard

ENGLAND:	
J. Smith c Latham b Foulkes	5
B. Duckett c Ravindra b Duffy	8
J. Root lbw Foulkes	2
H. Brook c Bracewell b Duffy	6
J. Bethell c Mitchell b Duffy	11
J. Buttler b Tickner	38
S. Curran b Tickner	17
J. Overton c Young b Santner	68
B. Carse c Mitchell b Tickner	36
J. Archer c Bracewell b Tickner	16
A. Rashid not out	1
EXTRAS (LB-1, W-13)	14
TOTAL (all out, 40.2 overs)	222

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-7 (Smith), 2-15 (Root), 3-17 (Duckett), 4-31 (Brook), 5-44 (Bethell), 6-97 (Curran), 7-102 (Buttler), 8-160 (Carse), 9-186 (Archer)

BOWLING: Duffy 10-0-56-3 (2w); Foulkes 8-1-27-2 (4w); Smith 6-0-40-0 (2w); Tickner 10-0-64-4 (1w); Santner 6.2-0-34-1

NEW ZEALAND:	
D. Conway run out	34
R. Ravindra b Curran	46
W. Young c Buttler b Overton	1
D. Mitchell c Buttler b Curran	44
T. Latham run out	10
M. Bracewell c Bethell b Rashid	13
M. Santner c Brook b Carse	27
N. Smith b Overton	2
Z. Foulkes not out	14
B. Tickner not out	18
EXTRAS (LB-3, NB-2, W-12)	17
TOTAL (for eight wkts, 44.4 overs)	226

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-78 (Conway), 2-81 (Ravindra), 3-92 (Young), 4-113 (Latham), 5-147 (Bracewell), 6-188 (Santner), 7-191 (Smith), 8-196 (Mitchell)

DID NOT BAT: J. Duffy

BOWLING: Archer 10-2-53-0 (2w); Carse 10-0-60-1 (2nb); Overton 10-1-32-2; Curran 8.4-1-46-2 (2w); Rashid 6-0-32-1

RESULT: New Zealand won by two wickets.
MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: Blair Tickner
SERIES: New Zealand won three-match series 3-0.
MAN-OF-THE-SERIES: Daryl Mitchell

Jos Buttler and Sam Curran stopped the rot with a partnership of 53 before Tickner removed them both and it was left to two more bowlers in Brydon Carse, who made 36, and Jamie Overton to show the batters the way with another stand of 58.

In-form Overton scored 42 and 46 in the first two ODIs and was England's top-scorer for the second match in a row with his maiden ODI half-century, an aggressive 68 from 62 balls.

Tickner, who was named man of the match, took a four-wicket haul for a second consecutive match having been called in as a replacement when quicks Kyle Jamieson and Matt Henry were injured.

Overton broke New Zealand's 78-run opening stand when he diverted Rachin Ravindra's shot onto the stumps at the bowler's end with Conway (34) stranded out of his crease.

Ravindra was sent back for 46 in the following over to give Curran his first wicket of the series and Will Young was caught behind off Overton before Carse repeated the deflection trick to run out Latham for 10.

Mitchell put on 34 with Michael Bracewell for the fifth wicket and 41 for the sixth with Santner, who showcased his power hitting by clubbing one six onto the stadium roof before holing out for 27.

England's bowlers kept chipping away, however, to set up a nervous finish for the home side with the smattering of fans around the arena cheering every run.

"We didn't quite get big enough scores to be able to defend them and give the bowlers the best chance to win us the game," said Brook. "We'll go back, we'll take the learnings that we've made from this trip here, and we'll try our best to be better in the future. And it probably didn't help that I didn't win a toss as well."—Agencies

NEW ZEALAND players celebrate with the trophy after the third One-day International against England at the Sky Stadium on Saturday.—AFP